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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8088

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1565

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR BM

SUBJECT: BURMESE PLANNING FOR HELICOPTER OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

REF: STATE 117238

1. SUMMARY. BURMA AIR FORCE HAS BEGUN PLANNING FOR OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF UH-1H HELICOPTERS, BUT REQUIRES ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION. BASE GON AIRA DISCUSSION WITH CHIEF OF TECH SERVICES (AIR) AND ENGINEERING STAFF OFFICER (AIR), THIS MESSAGE ADDRESSES SOME OF SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AS TO MAINTENANCE AND POL SUPPLIES RAISED REFTTEL; ADDITIONAL DETAILS AND OTHER SUBJECTS WILL BE COVERED BY SUBSEQUENT MESSAGES. END SUMMARY.

2. HUEYS WILL OPERATE FROM EXISTING THREE-LEVEL BAF BASE NETWORK. MINGALADON MAINTENANCE BASE FOR DEPOT-LEVEL MAINTENANCE, HMAWBI AND SHANTHE (MEIKTILA) "PARENT BASES" (I.E., PERMANENT LOCATIONS OF HELICOPTER UNITS), AND FORWARD OPERATING BASES, OF WHICH THOSE MOST RELEVANT TO PLANNED USE OF HUEYS AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS ARE KENG TUNG, LASHIO, NAMSANG, TACHILEK; AIRFIELDS AT HEHO AND LOIKAW ARE ALSO POTENTIALLY USEABLE. DETAILS OF BASE FACILITIES AND CAPABILITIES AVAILABLE FROM DIA. MAINTENANCE AND PARENT BASES CAN SUPPORT CONSIDERABLY MORE AIRCRAFT AND
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HIGHER LEVEL OF OPERATIONS THAN AT PRESENTBLO

3. BAF CURRENTLY CONDUCTS DEPOT-LEVEL MAINTENANCE (AT MINGLADON) ON AIRFRAM AND ON HYDRAULIC AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS OF ITS EXISTING HUSKIE AND VERTOL HELICOPTERS. DEPOT-LEVEL MAINTENANCE ON MAJOR ITEMS (TRANSMISSIONS, ROTORS, ENGINES) IS CONTRACTED FOR IN US. FIELD-LEVEL MAINTENANCE OF HUSKIES IS CONDUCTED AT PARENT BASES, AND ONLY MINOR MAINTENANCE AT FORWARD OPERATING BASES.

4. DEFINITIVE MAINTENANCE PLANS FOR THE HUEY CANNOT BE FORMULATED UNTIL ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS RECEIVED. BAF REQUIRES COMPLETE UH-1H TECHNICAL ORDER SERIES SO THAT AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS CAN BE STUDIED TO DETERMINE DEGREE OF SOPHISTICATION AND COMPARISON WITH EXISTING MAINTENANCE CAPABILITY LEVEL. ASSUMING HUEY SYSTEMS ROUGHLY COMPARABLE TO HUSKIE IN COMPLEXITY, THEN SAME MAINTENANCE PLANS WILL PROBABLY BE USED.

5. FOLLOW-ON SPARE PARTS SUPPLY HAS ALSO BEEN GIVEN PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATION BY BAF, WHICH HAS HAD EXTENSIVE (MOSTLY UNHAPPY) EXPERIENCE WITH PIPELINE SUPPLY. IT WILL THEREFORE BE VERY LEERY OF PROMISES WHICH CANNOT BE SUPPORTED BY FACTS, AND NEEDS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (PARA 9 BELOW) FOR PLANNING ON SPARE PARTS SUPPLY.

6. POL SUPPLIES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT HUEY OPERATIONS ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE REQUIRED FOR HUSKIE. AS DEPT AWARE, AVIATION JET FUEL IS PRODUCED AT SYRIAM REFINERY IN QUANTITIES SUFFICIENT TO MEET BURMESE NEEDS. HMAWBI AND SHANTHE ARE PRESENTLY EQUIPPED TO PROVIDE POL SUPPORT, AND INCREASE IN STOCKS NECESSARY TO SUPPORT ADDITIONAL OPERATIONS CAN BE READILY ACCOMPLISHED. POL AND ORDNANCE FOR FORWARD OPERATING BASES IS MOVED IN BY RAIL (LASHIO, HEHO) OR TRUCK. ROADS EAST OF LASHIO AND HEHO ARE SOMETIMES IMPASSABLE BECAUSE OF WEATHER OR INSURGENT ACTIVITY; IN SUCH CASES POL AND ORDNANCE CAN BE FLOWN IN BY C-47 CARGO AIRCRAFT. (ALL THE AIRFIELDS MENTIONED IN PARA 2 ABOVE ARE CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING C-47 OPERATIONS.) HANDPUMP REFUELING OPERATIONS SIMILAR TO THOSE EMPLOYED IN VIET-NAM CAN BE USED EFFECTIVELY.

7. MOST BAF MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO PRESENT HUSKIE AND VERTOL UNITS WERE TRAINED IN THE US 10-12 YEARS AGO. BAF IS ALSO FAMILIAR WITH THE MOBILE TRAINING DETACHMENT MAINTENANCE
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INSTRUCTION PROGRAM CONDUCTED BY USAF. GUB HAS NOT YET REACHED DECISION ON WHERE IT WOULD WISH TO HAVE HUEY MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL (OR PILOTS) TRAINED, BUT WE SUSPECT IT WILL OPT FOR TRAINING TO BE CONDUCTED IN BURMA BY CIVILIANS, PROBABLY FOR A NUCLEUS OF BAF SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL WHO WOULD IN TURN TRAIN ADDITIONAL BURMESE.

8. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMENTS WILL FOLLOW ON OTHER

SUBJECTS RAISED IN REFTTEL PARA 4.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: TO SUPPORT ADDITIONAL BAF PLANNING, REQUEST THE FOLLOWING BE AIR POUCHED ASAP: (A) INFORMATION ON OPTIONAL CONFIGURATIONS (E.G., GUNMOUNTS, WINCHES, LITTERS) WITH WHICH UH-1H CAN BE EQUIPPED; (B) COMPLETE SET OF UH1H TECHNICAL ORDERS, NOS. 1 THROUGH 6; (C) REPLACEMENT AND OVERHAUL COST DATA ON MAJOR ITEMS, E.G., ROTORS, TRANSMISSIONS, ENGINES; (D) DATA ON TIME-BETWEEN-OVERHAUL AND MEAN-TIME-BETWEEN-FAILURE OF MAJOR ITEMS LISTED ABOVE.

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